

Opera Company of Philadelphia

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Opera Company of Philadelphia Appoints Nathan Gunn as Director of the American Repertoire Council

Internationally-Renowned Baritone Takes On Advisory Role
Dedicated to the Creation of New American Works

Philadelphia, PA: Affirming its place as an emerging leader in the development of new operatic works, the Opera Company of Philadelphia announced today that **Nathan Gunn**, internationally-renowned baritone, has been appointed as the director of its newly-formed American Repertoire Council. This position will work with Opera Company of Philadelphia **General Director David B. Devan** to lead and populate a steering council focused on advancing the Opera Company of Philadelphia's **American Repertoire Program**, a commitment to produce a new American work in 10 consecutive seasons. The program launched in June 2012, with four announced co-commissioned operas as part of both the Aurora Series for Chamber Opera at the Perelman Theater and the Opera at the Academy Series.

"We are honored and thrilled to have Nathan step into this prominent role at the Opera Company of Philadelphia," shared Devan. "This partnership is born out of a genuine alignment between our company goals of driving momentum in the creation of new opera, and an artist who has an authentic track record as a performer and champion of American works throughout his career. Nathan has been contributing to our company on stage since 1996, and we believe that in this new position, he will play a key role in bringing countless important new opera projects to fruition in coming seasons. "

"It is a privilege to be asked by the Opera Company of Philadelphia to take on this role at such a pivotal time in my career and in the company's history," Gunn shared at the press conference. "I know, firsthand, the many challenges of creating lasting new work – the importance of putting together complementary creative partners, choosing the right artists, and identifying the resources to create something meaningful and relevant for today's audiences. I always enjoy when my work on the stage brings me to Philadelphia. I think it's particularly appropriate that a city known for its revolutionary spirit has made this significant commitment to the future of American work."

In addition to bi-monthly meetings leading the American Repertoire Council, which will be comprised of a committed group of national advisors with varying roles and involvement in the creation of new repertoire, Gunn will work closely with General Director Devan, **Music Director Corrado Rovaris**, and **OCP Artistic Advisor Mikael Eliassen** on artistic planning for future seasons. Gunn will also serve as artistic counsel to OCP's two

Composers in Residence, Lembit Beecher and Missy Mazzoli, as they each pursue their three-year development track in the creation of new operatic works.

The announcement was made at the Kimmel Center's Hamilton Rooftop Garden, located over the Perelman Theater where the American Repertoire Program was launched in June 2012. Against the backdrop of the national OPERA America Conference held in Philadelphia, ***Dark Sisters*** marked the inaugural piece in the program, written by composer **Nico Muhly** and composer **Stephen Karam**, and co-commissioned by the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and New York's Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group. The 2012 OPERA America Conference was also the site of the Opera Company of Philadelphia's second annual Chamber Opera Symposium, an invitation-based event which brought together international producers of intimately-scaled chamber works for discussions about the advancement of the genre.

In 2013, the American Repertoire Program takes the Academy of Music stage with ***Silent Night***, featuring music by **Kevin Puts** – for which he won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music – and a poignant libretto by **Mark Campbell**. The sets and costumes for this East Coast Premiere were co-produced with Minnesota Opera, where the opera had its world premiere.

Additional announced co-commissions include two new works with The Santa Fe Opera. The first commission, ***Oscar***, based on the life of Oscar Wilde, is composed by **Theodore Morrison**, with a libretto by the composer and **John Cox**. The opera will be performed in February 2015 at the Academy of Music as part of OCP's 40th Anniversary Season, following its 2013 world premiere at The Santa Fe Opera. The second commission is by the 2010 Pulitzer Prize-winner in music, **Jennifer Higdon**. Based on the bestselling novel ***Cold Mountain*** by **Charles Frazier** which won the National Book Award, it features a libretto by **Gene Scheer**, and will premiere in Santa Fe in 2015 before making its February 2016 East Coast Premiere at the Academy of Music. Nathan Gunn stars in the production in both Santa Fe and Philadelphia.

Gunn's multi-year contract begins this month. Further announcements regarding the American Repertoire Council are planned for the Opera Company of Philadelphia's season gala, ***N.O.W.: A Celebration of New Operatic Works***, which coincides with the East Coast Premiere of ***Silent Night*** in February 2013.

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ABOUT NATHAN GUNN



Nathan Gunn is regarded as one of the most exciting and in-demand baritones of the day. He has sung leading lyric baritone roles in many of the most renowned opera houses of the world including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Theatre an der Wien, and Bayerische Staatsoper. A supporter of new works, he created the roles of Clyde Griffiths in Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*, Father Delura in *Love and Other Demons*, Alec Harvey in Andre Previn's *Brief Encounter*, and Paul in Daron Hagen's *Amelia*. Also a distinguished concert performer, Mr. Gunn has appeared regularly with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra. He has also presented recitals in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, London, and Brussels.

Mr. Gunn has recently ventured outside the standard opera repertoire with appearances in performances of *Camelot* with the New York Philharmonic (broadcast live on PBS's *Great Performances*) and *Showboat* at

Carnegie Hall and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He also appeared in the New York Philharmonic's 80th birthday gala celebration for Stephen Sondheim and appeared with the orchestra in an evening of Broadway classics with Kelli O'Hara. Other engagements have included appearances with Mandy Patinkin in Rochester and at the Ravinia Festival, a series of cabaret shows at the famed Café Carlyle in New York City and at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Orange County, special guest artist in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's annual Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square, and a performance of Sting and Trudie Styler's work, *Twin Spirits* in the Allen Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Mr. Gunn's recording of *Billy Budd* with Daniel Harding and the London Symphony Orchestra (Virgin Classics), won the 2010 Grammy Award. Other recordings include his solo album, *Just Before Sunrise* (Sony/BMG Masterworks), *Rogers & Hammerstein's Allegro* (Sony Masterworks Broadway), *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (SONY Classics), and his debut album, *American Anthem* (EMI).

This season, Mr. Gunn returns to the Metropolitan Opera for *Le Comte d'Ory*, the Dallas Opera for *The Aspern Papers*, and the San Francisco Opera for the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*. He also appears in recital in Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, Boston's Jordan Hall, and in Edmond, Chicago, Berkeley, Terra Haute, and Notre Dame.

Mr. Gunn was the recipient of the first annual Beverly Sills Artist Award, and was awarded the Pittsburgh Opera Renaissance Award. He is an alumnus of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artists Program and was the winner of the 1994 Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition. Mr. Gunn is also an alumnus of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where he is currently a professor of voice.

ADDITIONAL OPERA COMPANY INFORMATION:

The Opera Company of Philadelphia's 2012-2013 Season opens with **Puccini's *La bohème* on September 28, 30m, October 3, 5 & 7m at the Academy of Music**, and in a free, public, big-screen **OPERA ON THE MALL broadcast on Saturday, October 6th at 7pm** on Independence Mall, generously funded by the Knight Foundation. *Silent Night* in February 2013 and *The Magic Flute* in April 2013 are also performed at The Academy of Music. **Curtis Opera Theatre's *Owen Wingrave*** and OCP's ***Powder Her Face*** are performed at the **Perelman Theater** at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Broad and Spruce Streets.

Full season subscriptions to Opera at the Academy or the Aurora Series for Chamber Opera at the Perelman Theater are on sale through October. Phone hours are Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 215-732-8400. **Tickets to *La bohème* are on sale with Ticket Philadelphia at 215-893-1018 or operaphila.org.**

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